

FACTSHEET

This fact sheet is for education purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professionals to make sure this information is right for your child. If you would like to provide feedback on this fact sheet, please visit: www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/fact-sheets/feedback-form.

Organ Donation

What is organ donation?

Organ and tissue donation occurs when a child that has died is able to donate their organs or tissue to a sick person to save or free them of painful and often debilitating medical treatment or to save their life.

Despite the advances in modern medicine there are still many people on the transplant list. Australia has one of the highest transplant success rates in the world.

Who can donate?

Neither age nor gender is a limit to the donation of organs. Organ donation is rare because you need to die in hospital, in an intensive care unit to be considered.

What can be donated?

In Australia you can donate your organs and tissues including heart, lungs, kidneys, pancreas, liver, intestines and eyes.

When does organ donation occur?

Organ donation occurs after someone has died. This can be after brain death (when blood stops going to the brain and all the cells of the brain die) or after circulatory death (when the heart stops beating). To donate organs you need to be in hospital and in intensive care. Less than 1% of people die in circumstances that allow them to be considered for organ donation. The doctors will talk to you to see if organ donation is the right thing for your family. This decision is one that you and your family need to be comfortable with for years to come.

How does donation proceed?

If your family is considering organ and/or tissue donation, a doctor or nurse who specialises in organ donation will meet with your family to talk about the process. You will be given time to be with your child to make the right decision for you and your family.

There is some paperwork they will fill out with you to consent to the donation. It may take up to 24 hours after this before your child goes to theatre because of the coordination of specialist surgeons to do the operation.

After the donation you can spend time with your child, usually in the intensive care unit. The donation specialist nurse will keep in touch with your family to update you on the transplantation and provide support for your family.

What will it look like?

Donation is like any operation. It is done in the normal sterile operating theatre. There is one incision that is closed during the operation and covered with a dressing.

Is it against my religion?

Most religions support and approve of organ donation as the greatest gift to save life. Religious or spiritual leaders can be contacted to talk to you about this.

What if there is a coronial investigation?

The doctors will tell you if the Coroner needs an autopsy. Organ donation may still occur with permission from the Coroner.

Can we have a normal funeral?

There should be no effect to the funeral service because of organ donation.

What will it cost?

There is no charge to the family

Can I choose the person to get the organs?

No. There are strict rules for selecting recipient based on the best match and need for the organ.

What support will my family get?

The team in intensive care and the donor nurse specialist will help your family through the donation process and answer any questions you might have. They will also give you support after the donation including information about the transplants if you wish, and access to support services and counselling. Later information on writing to the recipients anonymously can be provided.

The donation process can be stopped at any point by the immediate family in the event of having changed your mind.

How do I register to be a donor?

The Australian Organ Donor Register is a national register for you to record your decision about Organ donation for transplantation. You can register an intent to donate from the age of 16 years and fully register from the age of 18 years. It is very important to discuss this decision with your family so they know your wishes.

You can register your decision at:

www.donorregister.gov.au